

BUILDING A NETWORK THAT WILL PRAY FOR YOU

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Executive Summary

For many, the term networking is cringe-worthy. They picture awkward networking events, fake smiles, and sweaty handshakes. But, is there another way? Can we network without feeling uncomfortable and like we are simply using people? Networking with the intent to build social capital is a viable alternative to traditional networking and presents networkers with comfort and peace of mind.

In this paper, we explore what social capital is and how it differs from networking. We discuss the importance of social capital and its components. Finally, we explore how one can build social capital through networking and introduce practical steps that can assist any individual in improving their networking skills. Ultimately, this paper will help individuals and organizations network more comfortably, efficiently, and successfully.

ichariba choodee - “From the moment we meet, we become family.” Okinawan proverb

There is More to Networking than Networking

What is building a network really about? Is it about personal advancement? Is it about getting a job? Is it about building your rolodex? Is it about attending all of those uncomfortable professional networking events? Is it about helping your employees get along?

If you think networking is about any of the aforementioned, then you or your organization are probably doing it wrong. Ultimately, the art of networking is about building social capital.

Network Like a Mom

Spurred by my interest in networking and an observation that many of my colleagues lacked robust networking skill. I spoke with the best networker I know: my mother. In my opinion she is a master networker.

Thinking back on my childhood, she would constantly spark up conversations with random strangers while waiting in line at the grocery store, sitting in an airplane, or pumping gas—with no overt agenda. I cannot say that I remember getting the obligatory “stranger danger” talk as a kid. At small, family owned restaurants, she always insisted on meeting the owner, would ask about their family, and then to my embarrassment, she would proceed to gush about her wonderful baby boy, me, to people she had known for mere moments. A Panamanian born, first generation American and entrepreneur, she has made connections with everyone from CEOs to construction workers during her time in this country. In a recent conversation with her while she was in the hospital undergoing a procedure, I asked about her secret to networking.

She said, “First and foremost, building a network is about people; it’s about relationships. I am looking around my hospital room and it’s full of cards, flowers, plants, and balloons. Some of these people who sent me these things I haven’t talked to for years; other people I have no clue how they know I am in the hospital. What most people don’t understand about networking is that you want to *build a network that will pray for you.*”

When she said, “build a network that will pray for you”, a light bulb went on for me. She was not talking about religion or spirituality, she was talking about *social capital*. Her explanation of social capital was explained so concisely and powerfully that I chose it as the title of this paper.

Social capital is an “asset that yields a stream of benefits over time. An individual’s reputation for being cooperative within a social network is such an asset” (Annen, 2003). Another definition poses social capital as an investment in social

relationships for the purpose of obtaining another resource, asset, or benefit (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

But is it really that important to build social capital, to build a network that will pray for you? And how does one go about doing it?

Networking is Not Social Capital

Networking to build social capital is different than networking for the sake of building your rolodex. Having a plethora of business contacts does not mean that your network will come to your aid when asked. Furthermore, there will likely be little economic benefit from future interactions. Therefore, networking solely through socializing, politicking or interacting with outsiders, is not the same as building social capital (Wolff & Moser, 2009). This distinction is important in that networking is at the individual level and focuses on the “behaviors that are aimed at building, maintaining, and using informal relationships that possess the (potential) benefit of facilitating work-related activities of individuals by voluntarily granting access to resources and maximizing common advantages” (Wolff & Moser, 2009, 196). Networking is typically measured by how often people participate in intentional networking-like behaviors, such as getting drinks with colleagues, using contacts to get confidential advice, or discussing business matters outside of work (Wolff & Moser, 2009; Burkus, 2018). Social capital, however, focuses on the the *quantity and quality* of relationships and how you can facilitate new relationships while building social assets like trust, goodwill, and reciprocity to name a few. At its core, social capital is really about the structure of relations between people within a network (Wolff & Moser, 2009).

Graduate programs, and business schools in particular, stress the importance of networking. They hold workshops, give tips, and offer materials to help their students master the art (Tuttle, 2014). Unfortunately, educational institutions are designed to build human capital (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). That is, educational intuitions are set up to build an investment in ourselves in the form of training, knowledge, and abilities (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). This focus inward, although necessary, is not necessarily helpful in obtaining networking skill. Educational institutions are not designed to teach us the social skills to network and build social capital. This has led to a highly educated workforce that has little knowledge of how to form lasting professional relationships.

"You see these people who have no social skills get 45 cards at an event and they think they have networked." (Tuttle, 2014)

Without building social capital, the relationships that are made through networking activities could remain largely inactive regardless of networking activities. In other words, social capital may enhance networking activities and may be the key

component in facilitating the association between networking and the relationship (Wolff & Moser, 2009).

Why you should care?

Our world is incredibly complex and fluid. Information is brimming at our fingertips, but we still have trouble filling jobs, finding jobs, getting work done, and solving problems. At both the organizational level and the individual level, understanding how to build social capital is vital to building an effective network that can take you and, or your organization to the next level. That is, help you make that next career move or promotion. And at the organization level, social capital can help your team break down organizational silos and collaborate more effectively, ultimately leading to higher profits.

At the individual level: Once viewed as professional tool almost exclusively for salesman, networking is now a critical skill in nearly every industry. Networking with the intent to build social capital influences career success, executive compensation, and helps workers find jobs (Adler & Kwon, 2002). In addition, building social capital has protective effects in adolescents and emerging adulthood on depressive symptoms, alcohol use, and health (Gonsalves, 2007). It is estimated that 70-80% of professional jobs are obtained through networking (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). Furthermore, people who regularly take place in networking activities tend to have increased career satisfaction, salaries, and promotions (Wolff & Moser, 2009).

At the organization level: Increasing social capital creates a richer pool of applicants, facilitates inter-unit exchange, product innovation, cross functional team effectiveness, reduces turnover rates and dissolution rates. It also facilitates entrepreneurship and the formation of start-ups while strengthening supplier relations, regional production networks, and interfirm learning (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

For leaders of organizations, the greatest value from social capital is the amount of new ideas that can be introduced into the organization (Burkus, 2018). Ideas that have disrupted industries—Airbnb, Netflix, Uber, Amazon—have not been new ideas in and of themselves but disparate ideas migrated from different industries and combined into an innovative product or service to meet a market need (Burkus, 2018). Take Amazon, Amazon did not invent e-commerce, they simply made it more convenient by giving people a plethora of product options and shipping quicker than the competition.

Social Capital: The Engine that Drives Networks

Social capital is distinct from physical and human capital. The capital in social capital refers to largely intangible assets like trust, reputation, and respect. It is worth noting that most definitions of social capital speak about it in terms of a physical investment, such as building assets to yield an expected result. This means that building social capital is a long-term process, not an overnight fix.

Social capital is derived of two primary components: bonding and bridging (Gonsalves, 2007). Bonding capital is primarily built from relationships fostered in the family and community. Bonding capital is particularly useful moving social and community initiatives forward. For instance, a community organizer would want to build up bonding capital in order to help support their proposals. In contrast, bridging capital is created from connections made outside the community and family, through school, work or professional associations. These relationships are useful when navigating the social bureaucracy that is inherent with any institution, organization, or corporation. If you are trying to build a well rounded network like mom, both bonding and bridging social capital are necessary.

Building Social Capital

"Seek to build a community—to make better choices in the people with whom you partner—that's the only way to have greater long-term impact on the world."

Jeff Bezos

The building of social capital is most valuable when networks remain inclusive while at the same time allowing for ease of communication across the networks (Annen, 2001). If you consider your network an interdisciplinary team this might make more sense. In an effective interdisciplinary team, you have people with varying skill sets that are able to contribute their skill and expertise to the overall benefit of the team. However, in order for the team to take advantage of those skill sets, the information from an individual needs to be disseminated to the team.

Through the use of rounds, hospitals have the ability to share information across their networks. The classic patient rounds at Nashville General Hospital start with the resident presenting their patient to a group of medical and pharmacy students. After the attending physician weighs in a team dialogue occurs with the residents and pharmacy students in regard to the patient's condition, diagnosis, and medications. Each member of the team contributes their thoughts and opinions while the attending physician facilitates the dialogue, thus providing the patient with solutions from across disciplines and varying skill sets (Vargas, 2019). As you can see, this inclusive network facilitates valuable knowledge sharing for the good of the patient. Imagine the difficulty in treating the patient if rounds did not exist.

In addition to inclusive networks, there are four components that one should consider when attempting to build social capital: the size, the strength of the relationships, the pattern of the relationships, and the resources of their social network (de Janasz & Forret, 2008).

Bigger is better. Unfortunately, the current literature gives little guidance on what is considered a large network or what is considered a small network. This leaves wide ranges for comparison and subjectivity on what is a large or small network (Morrison, 2002).

Notwithstanding, having a large network is associated with greater organizational knowledge and task skill (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). If you have a larger pool of people to pull knowledge from, then you could better adapt to challenges requiring knowledge of different disciplines. Because smaller networks are more homogeneous than larger networks, building a larger network will likely bring in a more diverse range of ideas and information (Katowski, 2007). This extra information will present insights and ideas you likely would not have been introduced to otherwise. The main takeaway is to constantly try to grow your network through social capital.

All ties are important ties. Network ties refer to the closeness of one's relationships within a network and are determined by the intimacy of the relationship, frequency of contact, and emotional investment. (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). Weak ties are what most of us would consider acquaintances. These are the ties one might make at a professional networking event. Strong ties are friends, relatives, and colleagues to whom we have a greater emotional investment.

Both strong and weak ties can have a positive effect from a social capital perspective. Weak ties are generally more helpful in finding new jobs as they may contribute new and unique information that strong ties cannot access (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). This is because through weak ties you can access otherwise inaccessible networks.

A personal example of this was when I was introduced to a senior at Fisk University looking to break into Human Resources. I was introduced to her not because I work in HR, but because I have a large network comparative to my colleagues. After an impressive phone call with this young lady, I decided to introduce her to a Senior HR Business Partner that was a weak tie of mine. Oddly, this young lady knew of this person but had yet to successfully connect with her until I made the introduction. A few weeks later, she contacted me, elated, and said that the introduction had garnered her valuable insights. Not only had she landed a new job, but also had decided graduate school was her next move based on the feedback received from the HR BP. The information she gained from this weak tie would have been difficult for her to access otherwise.

Although useful, one of the issues with weak ties is longevity, simply for the fact that by definition they are not strong and memories fade. One method for attempting to keep weak ties is through social media. Social media can be used to maintain weak ties and to facilitate the bridging social capital that these ties can produce (Carpenter, Boster, Katowski, & Day, 2015). Weak ties can also be maintained through e-mail, phone, and text. Weak ties are useful in the initial employment stage and vital in preventing decreased trust, decreased job satisfaction, and absenteeism (Engel, 2008).

On the other hand, strong ties can be useful for complex or confidential information (de Janasz & Forret, 2008).

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Consider who you would share a secret with, this person is likely not a person who you do not know well. More than likely, this person is someone who you feel a deep connection or bond with—like a close friend, a trusted colleague or advisor, or a family member. If you are in charge of sensitive information at your organization you want to surround yourself with strong ties. A prime example of an organization that fosters these ties is the military. Military personnel, especially those who have gone to war together often have incredibly strong ties and refer to one another as "brothers and sisters in arms."

A subset of weak ties are dormant ties. Dormant ties were strong but have been weakened by time. For example, you had a friend in college who has now moved to a different place and you have lost touch. Dormant ties can be valuable because the connection is generally easy to rekindle, and your dormant tie likely has a whole new network that they can access for information.

Strong and weak ties seem to be correlated to whether a relationship is transactional or relational. Networkers who are relational-focused build long-term relationships as opposed to transactional-focused networkers who are not interested in the relationship. Transactional-focused networkers are more engaged in the purpose of the interaction, and therefore their network relationships tend to be more specific and short term (Luckzak, Mohan-Neil, & Hills, 2014). In one study, business owners who had a relational market orientation had stronger network ties and greater access to relational, economic, and intellectual capital (Luckzak, Mohan-Neil, & Hills, 2014). For these business owners, this meant stronger alliances, more business advice, increased referrals, greater access to low interest loans, and more new business ideas.

A nearly synonymous term for someone who is relational-focused or transactional-focused is a "giver" or "taker" respectively. A giver is someone who approaches most interactions from the standpoint of "what can I do for you?" (Grant, 2017). In contrast, the taker approaches most interactions from the standpoint of "what can you do for me?" In fact, in Adam Grant's Ted Talk on givers and takers, he presents evidence suggesting that the givers in an organization are the highest performing people in an organization over time. The takers tend to rise fast, but then once people realize they are largely self-serving, they tend to stagnate in the organization (Grant, 2017).

Resources matter. The resources of the individuals in your network can impact how effective your network is. Interacting with high status individuals in your network has been shown to have a positive effect on the prestige of an obtained position, implying that influence is often exerted by a powerful connection (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). Let us use a simple thought experiment to illustrate this: imagine if you had the president of the United States on speed dial and you were on the job hunt. Think about how many high profile people a president must interact with in order to fulfill her duties: donors, members of congress, white house staff, senior members of the military, ambassadors, head's of foreign state, CEO's, lobbyists, celebrities, etc... With the seemingly endless supply of high profile connections the president has access to, the probability is greater than average that you would find a prestigious position.

It's in the pattern. The pattern of your network can be thought of as how uniform or homogeneous your network is. If you know a lot of individuals from the same professions, academic disciplines, and locations, your network could be homogeneous. Many of these people would likely know other people within your network and would convey similar information to you. The more diverse your network, the more effective your network will be (Burkus, 2018). A diverse network will be an information hub that you can tap into at will to get new information, access new networks, pursue new opportunities, and to get things done that other people cannot.

Mom told an interesting story about when she worked for a health insurance company as a care coordinator; that speaks to how she was able to get things done when others could not. She received a call from a patient with COPD just before the end of the work day on a late Friday afternoon. The patient, "Frank," let her know that he had just been discharged from the hospital and was supposed to have had an oxygen delivery that never arrived. He said he was going to have to go back to the ER to get oxygen if it did not arrive because he did not have enough to get him through the weekend.

A co-worker who was familiar with the oxygen company who missed the delivery told my mom there was no way she could get the oxygen to this patient today and told my mom "good luck with that company." The company that the patient's insurance covered was notorious for being difficult to deal with. In addition, the co-worker maintained there were simply too many hoops to jump through and not enough time to jump through them: first an order had to be written by a registered nurse, the order had to be submitted by administration to the oxygen company, the company had to receive the order and fulfill the order, a driver had to be assigned and last the order had to be dispatched by the driver.

What the co-worker didn't know was that mom had built a network that would pray for her. Mom made a call to the first floor where she knew an RN (apparently no one talked to the people on the first floor). Mom asked her to write an order and then submit it personally, thus skipping the admin step. Once the RN faxed the order to the oxygen agency, mom called the oxygen company where she happened to know a supervisor. Mom let the supervisor know an order was just faxed and needed to be rushed. Even though mom had not spoken to this supervisor for a while, mom had previously built so much social capital with the supervisor that she was happy to oblige. The supervisor personally took the faxed order and assigned it to a driver herself cutting out the administrative hoops.

In the end, they were able to rush the order, and have it delivered to the patient within about three hours of the patient making the call to mom. When mom came to work the following week, her co-worker was astonished that the patient had received their oxygen delivery. Mom also had a voice-mail from Frank with a prayer and a blessing for going above and beyond the call of duty. Although mom was the catalyst, it was really her network and social capital that did the heavy lifting.

When one member of your network does not know another member, a structural hole exists, and these structural holes are the keys to building "bridging capital" (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). Structural holes in the pattern of your network are ideal for

building a more effective network. Like mom, structural holes can help you get things done that would be much more difficult without help from people in your network with different knowledge and skills. Bridging capital occurs when an individual is a "bridge" also known as a "connector" between people in different social networks (Carpenter, Boster, Katowski, & Day, 2015). If you are the bridge, you can exert greater influence through a network with structural holes because multiple connections may have to be made in order to bridge the holes. If you gain a reputation as a bridge or connector this can result in elevating your value across your network.

Think about the most powerful tech companies—Google, Facebook, Amazon—they all get their power from their ability to reach many different people across a spectrum of demographics. These companies profit from the data and information these connections produce. It is very similar with a personal network. Networks with structural holes are associated with upward mobility and greater managerial performance (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). One potential reason for this is that a person with structural holes in their network may have access to siloed parts of the organization. Therefore, they may be more valuable because they can disseminate information that would not otherwise be shared across the normal networks of the organization.

When thinking about how to build structural holes in your network consider three domains, organizational, professional, and community as people within these domains are less likely to know each other (de Janasz & Forret, 2008).

Social capital mapping

In addition, you should think about building social capital in different networks. Begin by organizing existing networks into the following relationship types: **personal**, **operational**, and **strategic** (Ibarra & Hunter, 2006). You will find that connections jump from one bucket to another or belong in multiple buckets and that is perfectly acceptable. People are multi-faceted, so although this is a good exercise for beginning to map your network, you should be careful not to think a connection's sole purpose is contingent upon the category you place them. For some networks their purpose for belonging to your network may be unclear for quite a while and that is okay too (Burkus, 2018).

Your **personal** network consists of family, friends, and close colleagues or mentors. For people who have difficulty networking, most people already have an unintentional informal network already built. The skills that you have used to foster your personal network are transferable; the biggest hurdle is not making connections, but making connections with intention (Burkus, 2018). Although there are certain personality traits that seem to facilitate networking—extroversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience—these personality traits mainly explain the rate of involvement in networking activities rather than the success of the networking activity itself (Kimm & Wolff, 2012).

Operational networks are the networks created in order to accomplish day-to-

day tasks (Ibarra & Hunter, 2006). An example of this might be the network that one builds across an organization when working on a particular project. Often these project teams are made of people from various parts of an organization in different disciplines. Think back to mom's story with her COPD patient, Frank. In order for mom to quickly and successfully get Frank's oxygen delivered she could not do it in isolation.

Last, a **strategic** network, which for many people might be the most difficult to conceptualize and manifest. This network is built with the intent to push forward your long term goals and should be built of people outside of your immediate sphere of influence. This network should determine how your role fits into the larger picture of the organization (Ibarra & Hunter, 2006). Outside of the organization this network should assist in future goals that may be years down the road. For instance, if you eventually want to become an executive you should start making strategic connections with executives today to facilitate this goal down the road.

Mind Your Connectors

Perhaps the most important individuals of any network are connectors, especially in business networks, which need people of varying backgrounds to solve problems. Connectors are distinct from networkers because networkers are constantly trying to meet people solely to further their personal or professional ends. In contrast, connectors develop networks seemingly unconsciously, and actively attempt to bridge their contacts for the benefit of their network. Connectors have many loose acquaintances associating with people of diverse talents; and can help you increase the number of structural holes in your network (Young, 2003). To identify them in your network, pick a potential connector and try to gauge the number introductions they have offered in relation to others in your network (Kotowski, 2007).

Connectors bring new people and ideas into networks, creating bridging capital. If you do not know how to solve a problem, it is likely that your connector knows someone who does. They also have the unique ability to be purveyors of change due to this level of connectedness across their network. Last, connectors can be strong allies when attempting to garner support for initiatives as they can be effective opinion leaders (Kotowski, 2007).

A loss of connectors in your network can have dire consequences because they tend to be the glue that holds networks together. If they are lost and not replaced, a network can collapse (Godfrey, 2008). With that said, networks are not stable, but are in a constant state of flux or churn (Burkus 2018; Morrison, 2002). Even so, it is important to touch base with your connectors on a regular basis to ensure you are maintaining those relationships and helping to prevent avoidable network collapse.

What's Mom's Secret?

"The only way to earn reciprocity from anyone else is for you to show generosity first." Al Gore

We have all been in awkward networking encounters. You know the ones where a person just seems a little too friendly, a bit too excited about meeting you, and a bit too interested

in reciting their accomplishments. Even worse, when you proceed to tell them about yourself they begin to scan the room to scope out their next victim because they have realized you are not going to accomplish their purpose. It is all too obvious this person is just looking to fulfill their own needs and has little interest in you apart from the superficial. Common interactions like this is why many of us equate networking with a four-letter word.

If disasters like this are so common place, should we just throw in the towel and give up on networking then? No, the real question is, what is mom's secret? Why is she so effective at building social capital through networking, while so many of us dread networking and have not even begun to think of building social capital.

Here are two stories that occurred within my own network that might help us discover mom's secret:

I went out to dinner with a colleague and two friends one night. My friends knew each other while my colleague was just being introduced. After pleasantries were exchanged, my colleague proceeded to dominate the conversation, talking about her interests and accomplishments. Whenever the topic strayed away from her interests, she would expertly steer it back down the rabbit hole of ego and narcissism. After dinner, my friends and I spoke. They were not interested in ever going to dinner with her again, and my friends were surprised that I would associate myself with her.

In another instance, a co-worker of mine received an email from a job-seeker interested in our company. Without a previous introduction, the email contained 10 subjective, open-ended, detailed questions about the firm and his views and opinions of the firm.

Unfortunately, the tie was too weak to sustain that level of information sharing (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). My co-worker did end up giving a cursory response, but he had no interest in cultivating a professional relationship with the job-seeker, and that was their last communication. He felt so offended that the job-seeker would ask so much of him and his time in an initial e-mail.

In both of the above instances, the networker is too interested in themselves or their agenda. That is perhaps the Achilles' heel of building social capital. This is also a main reason why people feel "dirty" when networking (Burkus, 2018). Networking in and of itself is all about the individual, but building social capital through networking is all about the relationship. Ultimately, the attitude you should have when networking is an **attitude of giving** not taking (Haggerty, 1999).

Baby Steps

If I told you should get to know someone better or make a new friend, you would probably be okay with that. If I told you I want you to network more you might feel a bit nauseated. But why? Networking is how big kids make new friends. But when it comes to networking, many people get stuck with where to even start. How do you grow your network if you are in the beginning of your career or are just not skilled at building a social capital driven network? Who should you reach out to? How can you build a

relationship with a stranger? The key is, start by knowing yourself and what type of networking activities are comfortable. If you are not comfortable going to a professional networking event, then do not go. If you do not feel comfortable going out for after-work drinks because you do not drink, then do not go. Participate in networking activities that make you feel comfortable. If you do this you will have more success and will come across as more genuine (Burkus, 2018).

Everyone who is reading this has a network they have already built if they look hard enough, so your first step should be to focus inside of your existing network. Even if your network is not robust, you can focus within your network to grow your network (Burkus, 2018). Start by reaching out to your dormant ties and then to your weak ties. Once you gain confidence, you can move on to build new ties ones.

What if you are not a good conversationalist? At times, even seasoned networkers find themselves with little to chit-chat about. Some of the easiest techniques for beginning or jumping back into a conversation include talking about the weather, complimenting an article of clothing or jewelry, and asking about where the person is from and how they ended up here. Oddly, it may not be the best idea to talk about your profession or ask about a person's profession unless you are at a specific professional event (Burkus, 2018). This topic could instigate an unwanted competition quite suddenly where there is a tendency to impress the other party in the conversation. This could end up bad if either of you sound like you are trying to "one-up" the other by reciting your professional resume and accomplishments, which often occurs at traditional networking events (Burkus, 2018). Similar to my friend's mistake, people at traditional networking events have to be cautious not to fall into the ego and narcissism trap. This line of conversation tends to bring people out of the social capital realm because the focus goes back to the individual and their professional agenda instead of on the person you should be getting to know. Ultimately, your goal for interaction should be to break through the professional facade by presenting your own genuine interest in them as a person, not as a tactical device to propel your career.

Another large pitfall when building social capital is the inevitable occurrence of social liability. Social liability refers to the problems that can ensue from negative relationships, e.g. false information, time drain, and sabotage (Engel, 2005). It is important to identify and eliminate any social liability from your network if at all possible. In some cases, the social liability is in your own organization, and therefore it can be challenging to eliminate such connections. Take for instance, if your supervisor is your negative relationship, this can be a tremendously hard connection to eliminate. In such instances, attempt to utilize your built-up social capital by approaching more productive connections in your network for similar tasks. With that said, this is not always possible in small organizations.

Don't be discouraged if you find this scary or difficult. The hardest part is the first action: picking up the phone, sending the text, scheduling the coffee, etc...

Quick Tips

Below are some networking activities that you may or may not feel comfortable doing. The most effective networking activities tend to be networking events that involve large groups of unconnected people that are all participating in some singular cause (Burkus, 2018).

- Taking part in a volunteer organization
- Serving on professional or charitable boards
- Participating in group athletics or activities
- Organizing group activities that you enjoy
- Coffee
- Breakfast / Brunch/ Lunch
- Throw a dinner party
 - Pro tip: tell your invitees to bring a plus one who you do not know
 - Bonus: Group your invitees together and assign them a dish to make

Before attending a networking event or activity ask yourself the following:

- Why am I going to the event?
- What do I hope to accomplish?
- Is there someone in particular I hope to connect with, if so how do I plan on doing it?
- Does this networking event fit into my current strategy for growing my personal, operational, or strategic networks?

The next time you meet someone ask yourself the following:

- What are you looking for?
- What can I give you?
- If I can't help you, who can I connect you to who can?

Please note that all the self-focused questions occur prior to meeting someone.

Once you meet someone the focus shifts from you to them.

Turbocharge Your Networking

Can you network without explicitly building social capital? Yes, of course. People do it all the time with varying degrees of success. A selfish networker can be effective, but they will likely have to go through many more people to obtain the same results as a successful networker—that is one who builds social capital through networking (Haggerty, 1999). In the long term, the networker who is more focused on others will be more successful (de Janasz & Forret, 2008).

Networking to build social capital will be like upgrading your horse and buggy to a performance sports car. If you strive to build intentional relationships focused on the good of the relationship instead of the good of yourself, magical things will start to happen. You will find you begin to make relationships easier, quicker, and that have more payoff for both parties. At that point, you will know that you are beginning to build a network that will pray for you.

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